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September 3, 1962

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

At your request, I have reviewed the Cuban position over the week end. Herewith my reflections. You will understand, of course, that I have not been following the matter closely over recent months.

W.W.R.

Attachment

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REVIEWED BY Sworick DATE 01/12/80

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September 3, 1962

Situation and Problem.

On the basis of existing intelligence the Soviet military deliveries to Cuba do not constitute a substantial threat to U.S. security. They do constitute a deterrent to certain types of surveillance and a means for improving certain types of Soviet intelligence. They also constitute evidence that Moscow, having been frustrated in certain directions, is in a mood to double its bet rather than cut its losses, at least on a selective basis. In this case, Moscow has moved strongly but defensively to meet Castro's anxieties about overflights and other intrusions, and to shore up his flagrantly weak economy.

These deliveries constitute, further:

1. A psychological move of some power in the Caribbean (where the fear of Cuba is authentic) and in the rest of Latin America (where the move could be regarded as the extension of a challenge to U.S. military hegemony in the Hemisphere).
2. A psychological move likely to heighten U.S. domestic anxiety with respect to Cuba.
3. A testing thrust by Moscow, which, at considerable financial cost and further commitment of prestige, places before us the question of where and how we should draw the line with respect to unacceptable action and behavior by the Communists in Cuba and the Hemisphere.

We face, therefore, a problem of both formulating a reaction and articulating it in ways designed to: diminish the political costs under 1 and 2, above; minimize the likelihood of any further extension of Cuban capabilities or Soviet capabilities emplaced in Cuba; and provide the legal and policy basis, under certain contingent circumstances, for the liquidation of communism in Cuba by force.

The following memorandum outlines the possible elements of both policy and exposition designed to meet the circumstances.

Policy

- A. Drawing the line. The ambiguities in the public mind, here and abroad, about the military meaning of the Soviet deliveries require not merely that we explain what they are and why -- up to a point -- we must also regard them as acceptable, but that we also clarify the

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kinds of installations and capabilities emplaced in Cuba which we would regard as unacceptable. The President must consider going beyond his statement of April 20, 1961: "I want it clearly understood that this Government will not hesitate in meeting its primary obligations which are to the security of our Nation!" These deliveries, rightly or wrongly, raise the question in the public mind of the security of the Nation; and it may, therefore, be appropriate to indicate what we would not be prepared to accept without direct military risposte. In general, that line should be drawn at the installation in Cuba or in Cuban waters of nuclear weapons or delivery vehicles, sea or land based. There may be other types of aggressive instruments that we would wish to include in this definition. In addition, this may be an appropriate occasion to underline our willingness to act with others in the Hemisphere against Cuba should Castro undertake direct or indirect aggression against other Latin American nations.

B. Legal basis for the line. If we are to put ourselves in a position at home and abroad to back this line effectively with the full weight of U.S. force and commitment, the line should be carefully grounded in law. Although the Monroe Doctrine is emotionally acceptable to most Americans as a legal basis for U.S. military action, it is not acceptable to our allies, either in the Hemisphere or abroad. On the other hand, various Hemispheric documents recognize the special status in this Hemisphere of "extra-continental" intervention (including the Rio Treaty of 1947); and Resolution II of the Punta del Este conference of January 1962 includes as paragraph 3 the following: "To urge the member states to take those steps that they may consider appropriate for their individual or collective self-defense, and to cooperate, as may be necessary or desirable, to strengthen their capacity to counteract threats or acts of aggression, subversion, or other dangers to peace and security resulting from the continued intervention in this hemisphere of Sino-Soviet powers, in accordance with the obligations established in treaties and agreements such as the Charter of the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance."

I am not an expert on Latin American law and agreement; but I believe it is possible and essential for us to establish our position in terms of our interpretation of those commitments. Having had a direct hand in drafting and negotiating the paragraph quoted above, I can attest that it was designed to provide two types of flexibility: with respect to various types of aggressive threats from Havana; and with respect to various possible groupings of Latin American states which might be prepared, under varying circumstances, to operate with us.

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The Communist position will, undoubtedly, be that we have established on the Eurasian land mass military installations proximate to their borders, including nuclear delivery capabilities. Our reply must be and can be that by regional security action, provided for under the Charter of the United Nations, this Hemisphere operates under a different set of rules than the Eurasian land mass. In this context it should be noted that we would be playing directly into Moscow's hands to use the occasion of pressure on us in Cuba to withdraw TROOPS from Turkey. There is no clear stopping place for Communist activities based in Cuba unless we hold fast to the special status in Hemispheric law and agreement of "extra-continental" intervention.

C. Heightening deterrence to indirect aggression. In association with those Latin American states willing to work with us on a bilateral or other basis, we should examine much more intensively than we have thus far the exact nature of the subversive activities operating out of Havana into Latin America. I understand that these are probably now at a relatively low level, involving the training and infiltration of agents; the passage of funds; and various forms of propaganda. We should heighten our efforts to interfere with these activities for two reasons: to strengthen the sense of confidence of the Caribbean countries; and to try to surface some firm evidence of this activity so that we have, in legal reserve, the right to invoke the collective security provisions of the Punta del Este conference of 1962. We need to prepare a "Jordan Report" on the Communist operation in Latin America. I am fully conscious of the difficulties of accumulating hard evidence. But I am not convinced a determined and professional effort has been made.

D. Increased economic pressure. These new Soviet deliveries give us the occasion to increase somewhat the economic pressure on Cuba and the cost to the Communist bloc of maintaining Cuba by diminishing Cuban trade with the Free World. That trade is not large and is not, at its present level, a major strategic variable in the fate of Cuba. We should not, therefore, expend an excessive amount of diplomatic capital to reduce it drastically. On the other hand, it is essential that our allies understand that we take seriously this new Soviet commitment to Cuba, that we are committing ourselves to the drawing of a line; and that they would be well advised to contract their trade with Cuba. This should be a quiet, determined, sustained campaign, not a one-shot effort at the level of the North Atlantic Council. Our NATO allies must come to understand that we are not prepared to accept symmetry between the Allied position on the Eurasian land mass and the Communist presence in this Hemisphere; and that a condition for understanding with Washington is their recognition of the seriousness of this matter to us.

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E. Communications with Moscow. In addition to explaining diplomatically to the Soviet Union the character and seriousness of the line we have drawn, we might consider suggesting that, given our world responsibilities, stretching from Berlin to Viet Nam, we would have to consider whether we were prepared to accept the continued existence of a Communist state in Cuba should Communist initiatives elsewhere lead to a heightening of tension. If they argue they are only doing in Cuba what we do in Turkey, West Germany, etc., we must underline very hard with them these two points: first, the security arrangements of the Hemisphere have a long history which, by common agreement, places the intrusion of extra-continental military power outside the law; second, the crises in the world -- for example, in West Berlin and in South Viet Nam -- derive from Communist expansionist initiatives, beyond the legal limits of Communist power. We are now bearing a unique responsibility for meeting those aggressive thrusts throughout the Free World; and we have the right and duty to calculate whether we are prepared to accept the Cuban annoyance on our flank, if their aggressive ventures continue or expand, in Berlin, Viet Nam, or elsewhere.

F. Collective action: Hemispheric or Caribbean? We should consider carefully whether we shall wish to organize in the next several months either a Hemispheric or Caribbean meeting (or both) to consider collectively the problem posed by the present situation in Cuba. We do not wish to have a Hemispheric meeting which results in extended conflict and debate between those who are worried and those who are not particularly worried about the Cuban threat. On a Hemispheric basis it may emerge, however, that the line proposed here would be accepted; that is, the development of an offensive Communist capability in the Hemisphere would be judged unacceptable. In that case the area of security understanding in the Hemisphere would have been clarified and the bases for possible subsequent action would be strengthened. If we should find that no useful Hemispheric meeting can be held -- or, perhaps, in any case -- it may well be helpful for us to meet with the Caribbean nations who share our interest and anxiety, as a sub-regional grouping of the OAS. The language of Article 1 of Resolution II of the Punta del Este conference of January 1962, which states (paragraph B), provides a flexibility which might permit us to call a meeting of interested members. This involves certainly some diluting the OAS; but these might be mitigated if such a meeting reported its findings to the Council. In any case, the heightened situation in Cuba dramatizes further the split between the Caribbean nations and the rest. A great deal of OAS maneuvering has been designed to limit the possibility of unilateral U.S. intervention in other Latin American countries. We must make clear that, while we are prepared to accept that inhibition, we are a Caribbean as well as a Hemisphere nation; there are others who share our anxiety about the

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Cuban situation; and we cannot permit the less interested members of the OAS preventing the more interested nations from protecting their vital interests centered in the Caribbean.

In facing this issue we should be conscious of the following possibility: the whole Hemisphere may agree with the line we draw with respect to offensive and defensive arms in Cuba; only the Caribbean nations (plus a few others) may be willing to act with respect to indirect aggression or cooperate with us in covert operations against Cuba. This distinction could pull the Hemisphere apart; or, with skillful diplomacy, it might be turned to our advantage.

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We should consider the possibility of a Two-Track approach.

Track One would consist of a heightened effort to move along the present Mongoose lines. The minimum objective here would be harassment: the maximum objective would be the triggering of a situation where there might be conflict at the top of the Cuban regime leading, hopefully, to its change or overthrow by some group within Cuba commanding arms.

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Track Two would consist of an effort to engage Cubans more deeply, both within Cuba and abroad, in efforts for their own liberation. This requires an operation with the following characteristics:

- a. Authentic Cuban leadership with a considerable range of freedom to implement ideas and to assume risk.
- b. Minimal U.S. direct participation: ideally, one truly wise U.S. adviser -- available, but laying back; equipped to provide finance, but not monitoring every move; capable of earning their respect rather than commanding it by his control over money or equipment.
- c. Basing outside the United States.
- d. A link-up with the scattered and sporadic groups and operations now going forward of their own consent in Cuba.
- e. A plan of operation which aims at the overthrow of Castro primarily from within rather than by invasion from without.
- f. A long enough time horizon to build the operation carefully and soundly.

In suggesting that Track Two be studied -- and sharply distinguished from Track One -- I am, of course, wholly conscious of our failure of last year. But, as I read that failure in retrospect, its root lay in: U.S. bureaucratic domination; the lack of a Cuban political and organizational base; and a plan of operation that hinged on a type of overt invasion by a fixed date rather than the patient build-up of a true movement of national liberation. I'm sure it would be easy to argue that such a movement could not be generated against a Communist control system; that the Cuban refugees lack the capacity to play their part in such an enterprise with skill and minimal security; etc. And I am in no position to reply with confidence to such argument. On the other hand, Cuba is not located in Eastern Europe; and, presumably, some lessons have been learned something from last year's failure, too.

As a result, I am prepared to recommend that Track Two be systematically studied and that General Lansdale be asked to formulate a design for it.

H. Contingencies. Evidently the contingencies suggested for planning in NSAM 181 deserve urgent attention. Among the tactical possibilities not listed in that memorandum might be included, under circumstances of heightened tension (but short of justification for blockade, invasion, or counterforce air strike), [

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These should now be prepared and the contingent military operations should be related, in each case, to the relevant rationale.

I. Policy conclusions. To sum up, I propose that you consider that we:

-- expose the reasons why the recent shipments do not constitute a threat to national security sufficient to justify our destroying communism in Cuba with our own arms;

-- draw the line on the basis of Hemispheric agreements on which we would go to war;

-- use the occasion to underline the illegitimacy of indirect aggression in the Hemisphere, on the basis of Hemispheric agreements, and heighten our efforts to develop hard evidence which might be the basis for later collective action against Cuba on such grounds;

-- use the occasion to move our NATO allies towards a deeper understanding of our concern and gradually press them towards a reduction of their trade with Cuba;

-- communicate to Moscow the possible unacceptability of continuing to have under protracted or increased tension initiated by Communist elements into the Free World;

-- consider whether Hemispheric, Caribbean, or two-level collaboration is feasible or desirable in reinforcing our position;

-- press forward with Hong Kong, but consider Track Two;

-- prepare and relate intimately military and political contingency plans for the full spectrum of possible occasions when the direct application of U.S. force may be appropriate.



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J. Articulation.

1. The public articulation of our reaction -- if policy should assume something like the form suggested here -- might well involve two major statements: one by the President; the other, a substantial speech by Secretary Rusk. Since we do not propose to bring U.S. force to bear now, it would be inappropriate for the President to go to the country with a major address. But, since we may wish to draw a line, with rather complex contingent consequences, underlining its relation to Hemisphere agreements, a more spacious exposition by the Secretary of State may well be appropriate.

2. What follows is an outline for a speech by Mr. Rusk. Some of its major themes might constitute also the substance of a prior statement by the President at, say, a Press conference.

3. Outline of speech by the Secretary of State.

Note: The general tone of the speech should be low key, factual, somewhat legalistic, confident, with its warning to Moscow and Havana and its seriousness for our allies and our own people unmistakable.

a. Recall Castro history and takeover as part of 1957-61 Communist offensive embracing Southeast Asia, Berlin, Congo, as well as Cuba. Describe what has happened to that offensive.

b. Describe degeneration of Cuba and relate to degeneration in East Germany, China, etc.

c. Describe Soviet moves in some detail, emphasizing their character as a shoring up operation on the economic side. Comment on bleak prospects for Cuban agriculture under collectivization.

d. On military side, emphasize the defensive character of new installations and equipment. Recall President's April 20, 1961 reservation with respect to national security; and characterize new installations as not now constituting a threat to national security. Reference Indonesia, Iraq, U.S. ability to cope should a crisis come.

e. Draw the line, with extensive references to mutual commitments in the Hemisphere going back at least to 1947.

f. Recall Castro's earlier activities against Caribbean nations; recall Punta del Este Resolutions; issue sharper warning than ever before on indirect aggression, perhaps in context of Castro's December 2, 1961 references to guerrilla warfare being "the match thrown into the haystack." Describe our efforts with Latin American states to deter and deal with such efforts.

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g. Reaffirm our intent to hold the frontiers of freedom on a world basis, from Berlin to Viet Nam, adding, perhaps: "We do not intend to permit communism in Cuba to distract us or to interfere with us in the conduct of this mission."

h. Express confidence that Cubans, in old Latin American tradition, will find ways to rid themselves of this dictatorship.

i. Close with references to Alliance for Progress; beginnings of serious movement forward (first DAC meeting on Colombia scheduled for second week in September); confidence that Latin America will carry through Alliance for Progress successfully; and assert that we shall not only contribute to Alliance for Progress but, if necessary, assure, by our combined action in the Hemisphere, backed by total U.S. capabilities, that communism shall not disrupt this decade of constructive effort.